NUMB. CCCCXX.

The SPECTATOR.

Quocunque volunt mentem Auditoris agunto. Hor.

Wednesday, July 2. 1712.

S the Writers in Poetry and Fiction borrow their ſeveral Materials from outward Objects, and join them together at their own Pleaſure, there are others who are to follow Nature more cloſely, and to take Scenes out of her. Such are Hiſtorians, naPhiloſophers, Travellers, Geographers, and, Lord, all who deſcribe viſible Objects of a dence.

the moſt agreeable Talent of an Hiſtorian, ble to draw up his Armies and fight his Bate proper Expreſſions, to ſet before our Eyes ions, Cabals, and Jealouſies of Great Men, lead us Step by Step into the ſeveral Actions rts of his Hiſtory. We love to ſee the Subolding it ſelf by juſt Degrees, and breakn us inſenſibly, that ſo we may be kept in a Suſpence, and have Time given us to raiſe ectations, and to ſide with one of the Parcerned in the Relation. I confeſs this ſhews e Art than the Veracity of the Hiſtorian, only to ſpeak of him as he is qualified to e Imagination. And in this reſpect *Livy* haps, excelled all who ever went before him, e written ſince his Time. He deſcribes ing in ſo lively a manner, that his whole is an admirable Picture, and touches on ſuch Circumſtances in every Story, that his Reakes a kind of Spectator, and feels in him the variety of Paſſions, which are correſpon the ſeveral Parts of the Relation.

among this Sett of Writers, there are none re gratifie and enlarge the Imagination, than hors of the new Philoſophy, whether we r their Theories of the Earth or Heavens, coveries they have made by Glaſſes, or any f their Contemplations on Nature. We are ttle pleaſed to find every green Leaf ſwarm illions of Animals, that at their largeſt Growth big enough to be Viſible. There is ſomething ging to the Fancy, as well as to our Rea the Treatiſes of Metals, Minerals, Plants and Meteors. But when we ſurvey the whole Earth at once, and the ſeveral Planets that lie within its Neighbourhood, we are filled with a pleaſing Aſtoniſhment, to ſee ſo many Worlds hanging one above another, and ſliding round their Axles in ſuch an amazing Pomp and Solemnity. If, after this, we contemplate thoſe wide Fields of *Æther*, that reach in height as far as from *Saturn* to the fixt Stars, and run abroad almoſt to an Infinitude, our Imagination finds its Capacity filled with ſo immenſe a Proſpect, and puts it ſelf upon the Stretch to comprehend it. But if we yet riſe higher, and conſider the fixt Sars as ſo many vaſt Oceans of Flame, that are each of them attended with a different Sett of Planets, and ſtill diſcover new Firmaments and new Lights, that are ſunk farther in thoſe unfathomable Depths of *Æther*, ſo as not to be viſible to the naked Eye, we are loſt in ſuch a Labarynth of Suns and Worlds, and confounded with the Immenſity and Magnificence of Nature.

Nothing is more pleaſant to the Fancy, than to enlarge it ſelf, by Degrees, in its Contemplation of the various Proportions that its ſeveral Objects bear to each other, when it compares the Body of Man to the Bulk of the whole Earth, the Earth to the Circle it deſcribes round the Sun, that Circle to the Sphere of the fixt Stars, the Sphere of the fixt Stars to the Circuit of the whole Creation, the whole Creation it ſelf to the Infinite Space that is every where diffuſed about it; or when the Imagination works downward, and conſiders the Bulk of a Human Body, in reſpect of an Animal, a hundred times leſs than a Mite, the particular Limbs of ſuch an Animal, the different Springs that actuate the Limbs, the Spirits that ſet theſe Springs a going, and the proportionable Minuteneſs of theſe ſeveral Parts, before they have arrived at their full Growth and Perfection. But if, after all this, we take the leaſt Particle of theſe Animal Spirits, and conſider its Capacity of being wrought into a World, that ſhall contain within thoſe narrow Dimenſions a Heaven and Earth, Stars and Planets, and every different Species of living Creatures, in the ſame Analogy and Proportion they bear to each other

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in our own Universe; such a Speculation, by reason of its Nicety, appears ridiculous to those who have not turned their Thoughts that way, tho', at the same time, it is founded on no less than the Evidence of a Demonstration. Nay, we might yet carry it farther, and discover in the smallest Particle of this little World, a new inexhausted Fund of Matter, capable of being spun out into another Universe.

I have dwelt the longer on this Subject, because I think it may shew us the proper Limits, as well as the Defectiveness, of our Imagination; how it is confined to a very small Quantity of Space, and immediately stopt in its Operations, when it endeavours to take in any thing that is very great, or very little. Let a Man try to conceive the different Bulk of an Animal, which is twenty, from another which is a hundred times less than a Mite, or to compare, in his Thoughts, a length of a thousand Diameters of the Earth, with that of a Million, and he will quickly find that he has no different Measures in his Mind, adjusted to such extraordinary Degrees of Grandeur or Minuteness. The Understanding, indeed, opens an infinite Space on every side of us, but the Imagination, after a few faint Efforts, is immediately at a stand, and finds her self swallowed up in the Immensity of the Void that surrounds it: Our Reason can pursue a Particle of Matter through an infinite variety of Divisions, but the Fancy soon loses sight of it, and feels in it self a kind of Charm, that wants to be filled with Matter of a more sensible Bulk. We can neither widen nor contract the Faculty to the Dimensions of either Extreme: The Object is too big for our Capacity, when we would comprehend the Circumference of a World, and dwindles into nothing, when we endeavour after the Idea of an Atome.

It is possible this Defect of Imagination may not be in the Soul it self, but as it acts in Conjunction with the Body. Perhaps there may not be room in the Brain for such a variety of Impressions, or the Animal Spirits may be incapable of figuring them in such a manner, as is necessary to excite so very large or very minute Ideas. However it be, we may well suppose that Beings of a higher Nature very much excell us in this respect, as it is probable the Soul of Man will be infinitely more perfect hereafter in this Faculty, as well as in all the rest; insomuch that, perhaps, the Imagination will be able to keep Pace with the Understanding, and to form in it self distinct Ideas of all the different Modes and Quantities of Space.

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